

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION:

Please amend the as-filed specification at follows:

Page 17, please replace the first paragraph at lines 1-11 with the following new paragraph:

According to one embodiment, the layered material (b) may be selected, for example, from phyllosilicates such as: smectites, for example, montmorillonite, bentonite, nontronite, beidellite, volkonskoite, laponite, hectorite, saponite, and saucomite; magadiite; kenyaite; stevensite; vermiculite; halloysite; sericite; aluminate oxides; hydrotalcite; and mixtures thereof. In some embodiments, the layered material is montmorillonite. In some embodiments, the layered materials described herein comprise exchangeable cations such as sodium (Na^+), calcium (Ca^{2+}), potassium (K^+), or magnesium (Mg^{2+}), present at the interlayer surfaces.